THE LIFE OF AN ENGLISH COUNTESS.

LADY JERSKY AND HER ROMANTIC

A writer in a late number of Belgravia gives pleasant sketch of the life of the late Dowager Countess of Jersey—long a leader of fashion in England, the friend of Byron, and the heiress of immense wealth. She was the eldest daughter of the tenth Earl of Westmoreland; was born in 1785, and before her marriage bore the name of Lady Sarah Fane.

Independently of her beauty, she obtained great celebrity by having become heiress to the immense fortune of Mr. Child, the banker, her maternal grandfather. By right of prime-geniture her elder brother, Lord Burghersh, ought to have had the largest share of the inheritance; but peculiar circumstances induced the old banker to dislike the first grandchild.

AN ELOPEMENT. It appears Mr. Child had many crotchets, foremost of which was his hatred of the nobility. when talking of his property he was in the habit of saying that no aristocrat should ever touch one penny of it. One morning he was thunderstruck on being informed that his only daughter, the presumptive heiress of all his wealth, had eloped with the Earl of Westmoreland, a young spendthrift over head and ears in debt. We Child's rage knew no bounds. Given land, a young spendthritt over head and ears in debt. Mr. Child's rage knew no bounds. Guessing the route they had taken, he immediately followed them. Promising a high reward to the postlions, he was driven at such a furious pare as not only to gain on the happy pair, but actually to overtake them. At the moment, however, when his carriage came up with Lord Westmoreland's, and when Mr. Child was better Westmore and's, and when Mr. Child was in the act of jumping out, the Earl's postition turned round, ared, and killed one of the banker's leaders. During the confusion which followed this unforeseen act, the Earl's carriage dashed unmolested by on the read to Gretna Green.

This gallant deed was gratefully acknowledged y Lord Westmoreiand, who immediately took the faithful post boy into his service, where he was promoted from one post to another. More than sixty years after the event just narrated took place, he was still in the family. His first patron having died, o'd Gilham had been in-stalled in the lodge at Middleton Park, the Countess of Jersey's seat in Oxfordshire, where he remained until his death.

he remained until his death.

Mr. Child, being thus suddenly stopped in his pursuit when his daughter was almost in his grasp, was exasperated beyond measure. Returning to a home made desolate by her desertion, he vowed to sparn all her advances towards a reconciliation. That yow he kept for a considerable time. Even when her eldest son was born his anger remained undiminished. It was only on the birth of a daughter, when Lady was only on the birth of a daughter, when Lady Westmoreland's health began to Iail, that the old father's heart softened towards her, and they became reconciled. To prove, however, the strange waywardness of the human heart, he could never bring himself to like his daughter's first-born, whom he in a manner disinherited by making a will in which the whole of his normous fortune was settled on her little girl, the subject of this memoir.

THE HEIBESS. On Mr. Child's death Lady Sarah Fane became possessed of a yearly income of afty thousand pounds, in addition to a share in her grandtather's bank. For many a long year on a cer-tain day, when the affairs of the establishment were made up for the twelvemonth, Lady Jerwere made up for the twelvemonth, Lady Jersey's carriage might be seen wending its way towards Temple Bar, where the pontifex maximus of fashion might be seen to descend and enter the bank building. There, for once laying aside the ways of a fine lady, she quietly dined with the partners, atterwards devoting the whole evening to business.

Possessing rank, beauty, and riches, it may easily be imagined that Lady Sarah Fane had many admirers, and that candidates for marriage presented themselves in numbers. From amongst them she chose George Villiers, fifth Earl of Jersey, son of the Countess Frances, the Bishop of Raphoe's daughter. The match was one of pure affection on either side, and re-mained so to the end of their singularly happy wedded life. He was her senior by twelve years, was of an amiable disposition, and, as fac as personal appearance was concerned, was an admirable match for her. They are said to have been the handsomest couple of their time, to which their portraits, painted about sixty years

LADY JERSEY AS A LEADER OF FAHION. In the matter of dress Lady Jersey's taste was exquisite, and the tout ensemble in such perfect harmony as never to look elaborate. It must be admitted, however, that her fastidiousness and luxury were carried beyond ordinary bounds. Knowing that the eyes of all female exquisites were turned ou her, she changed every article of clothing from head to foot four times a day. Although this may appear ex-

cessive, she was less luxurious than the late Empress of Russia, who, not content with dressing herself nightly in three different costumes, also compelled the ladies of her court to do the same by these simple words, "Mesdames, vous Having taste and tact in perfection, Lady Jer-

sey became, by general consent, a leader of lashlon, and the haute voice acknowledged her as such by implicitly obeying any laws she chose to lay down. When, therefore, she decreed that, to be distinguished from the parvenues, the "exclusives" must in future make a change in their pronunciation of certain words. not a dissentient voice was heard, all being eager

to follow their leader.

Saying "to be drove in a chariot," "to have a goold ring," "chopped hands," and making use of similar recherche phrases, was considered a sufficient sign of exclusiveness. In a very short time everybody with the least pretension to fashion talked in imitation of Lady Jersey, and most of these expressions still survive. As patroness of Almack's she ruled for many years supreme, and is said to have been so conscientious in the distribution of her vouchers as to have first required ocular proof of the candidates' skill before admitting them to the terpsichorean temple.

Her own private parties were gayer than other people's, and her balls the most brilliant of the season. Independently of her faultless taste in the ornamentation of the rooms, the success of her entertainment was chiefly due to her own fascinating manners, and to her singu-lar talent of adapting them to every age. This was the key to her great and long-continued popularity, for her invitations were sought with like eagerness by the hisping guardsman and the hoary politician. The latter were, however, her favorites, and remained so to their end, for

she outlived them all. she outlived them all,

Two generations of politicians, all personal
friends of the Counters of Jersey, had passed
away before she herself ended her carthly
career. During the first years of her married life, all the great statesmen, including Fox, Pitt, Canning, Castlereagh, and others, used to meet at her house, where politics were treely discussed, she being considered by all worthy of their confidence. Strange as it may appear, Lord Jersey, although always present at these discussions never took any active part in polidiscussions, never took any active part in poli tice. It is said he once rose from his seat in the House of Lords, when it was whispered, "Lord Jersey is going to speak," and a breathless silence followed. The good man, however, merely went to shut the door, after which he quietly sat down again.

BYRON'S ASYLUM. She alone, with her husband constantly by her side, could with propriety offer an asylum to Lord Byron when every other do closed against him. During the years of 1814-15 he found a hospitable shelter at Middleton Park, where he passed the greater part of that dark period in sectuation, brooding over his wrongs, whether real or imaginary. When the evil spirit domineered he hated the sight of a human being. Avoiding all communication with human being. Avoiding all communication with the family, he at those times remained shut up, in his room during the day, living on hard bis-cuits and water. In the dead of night, when every soul was asleep, he would leave the house and rush through the adjoining wood until day-light and the early laborers appeared, when he would excep back into his room haggard and worn out.

Neither Lord por Lady Jersey interfered with the unhappy man, whose state of mind was at that time bordering on insanity. They pitted him, and received him with great kindness whenever he chose to join them at dinner. This he would do now and then, when less excited, especially when a certain neighboring lord, a reputed hard drinker, was expected. Lord Byron, who had been living like an anchorite perhaps for a month past, or even longer, would then lay a wager to drink Lord C — under the table, a feat which he invariably accomplished. Coolly walking off to bed, he then left to the servants the task of conveying the drunken man to his room—no easy task, his lordship getting, as a rule, so helplessly drunk as still to reel about next morning when following the hounds.

THE CARLTON HOUSE SCANDAL. When the scandal about Cariton House was When the scandal about Cariton House was freely commented on, the young Countess of Jersey refused to appear any more at a court presided over by George the Fourth. Resenting this slight, the Prince Regent thought of indicting a terrible punishment on her by sending back her portrait, which had belonged to his "gallery of beauties." This ungaliant act induced Lord Byron to write in Lady Jersey's album some well-known verses. Strictly adhering to her resolution of retirement, the young Countess held her court during that time at Countess held her court during that time at Middleton Park; the Lady Jersey whose name appears so conspicuously among the visitors at Carlton House was the Countess Frances, who had been a widow since 1805. Middleton Park bad been originally her country seat; but she, being of a saving dispensation, and the Earl far from rich, the house is said to have been a mean structure when their son married Lady Sarah Fane in 1804. On his inheriting the title and estate, the old house was demolished and rebuilt under the Countess Sarah's direction in the present style, which for more than half a century has been considered the perfection of elegance and comfort.

DOMESTIC LIFE. Before misfortune visited the family-the time from which my personal observation dates—the whole estate was a real Eden, owing to Lady Jersey's princely liberality. The usual staff of servanis for the house, including those for dairy, laundry, gardens, and stables, smounted to more than seventy and at festive seasons extra hands were engaged from the village. lage. Lady Jersey was radiant when there happened to be smong her guests a sprinkling of royalty, for whom she had a great penchant, though their suite and the company invited to meet them used to swell the original number of her establishment to sixteen hundred a week. At least, the returns in the cook's, steward's and housekeepers' room all agree in this respect.

The Counters' own lite being like an open book, she never harbored the least suspicion against others; consequently, while priding herself on the capital management of her household, she butle dreamt that her health was nightly drunk in champagne, hock, and was hightly drunk in champagne, hock, and tokay by the ladies and gentlemen in the Steward's room, and that her maids, when being banded into dinner by these gentlemen, were dressed out in her linery. It was only when being informed that her old housekeeper had been measured for a riding habit, and was talking of having one of Lord Jersey's left-off horses, that a light seemed to dawn on her, and dismissing the unfaithful stewardss, she redismissing the unfaithful stewardess, she re-placed her with one more discreet in language. It had been Lady Jersey's custom to stay at Middleton Park from August until the end of February, during which time a succession of visitors arrived and departed as at Court.

VISITORS. There, in her maturer years, a second genera-tion of politicians visited her, and valued her iriendship as much as their predecessors had done. They were cosmopolitans, having the old though not venerable-looking Talleyrand at their head, whose sardonic features, chin buried in a formidable cravat, and high wooden shoe, gave him the appearance of the diable botteux. Another welcome visitor was Prince Pozzo di Borgo, by birth a Corsican, who, in spite of being described by one of his colleagues as un fin malou, became silly as a little child at the end of his career, and was said to have, child-like, played with a doll. The Russian Count Pahlen, Sir Robert Peel, the Duke of Wellington, and the strength of the s and a long string of Esternazys, with their chief, the ambassador Prince Paul, were also frequent guests. The latter, one of Lady Jersey's oldest friends, was said to have taught her to waltz before this dance was known in England. There must be some truth in this statement; for one night these two diplomatists distinguished themselves in a waitz in such a manner as only master and pupil could have done.

Some one was playing a march, when the Prince, mistaking it for his favorite dance, gallantly engaged Lady Jersey. While everybody in the room was smiling, the two politicians whirled round steadily and gracefully until the last cord had been struck, when both exclaimed

Quelle jolie vaise ! The Countess did not excel in music; nor, if the truth must be told, did she excel in any accomplishment. Hers was an active but rest ess mind, which did not incline towards study. Independently of politics, she was feminine in her occupations; and after the evening papers were read, was as a rule employed about som Berlin wool-work, which, however, seemed never to get finished on account of the numerous mistakes made during an animated con

Besides her mother tongue she spoke only French, which she spoke fluently and habitually even to her children. This custom, though no doubt well meant, gave to their daily inter-course an air of restraint, none of them being on the same familiar footing with her as with their father, who always talked to them in English, and to whom they clung with truly filial affection.

LADY JEBSEY'S DAUGHTERS. Although the Countess was devotedly attached to all her children, her solicitude was chiefly directed towards her daughters, regarding whose health she was in constant communication with Sir Henry Halford, the Æsculapius of the time. While young the Ladles Villiers had their own establishment in a distant part of the house at Middleton Park, and went to their mother only at stated times to say their catechism and to receive instructions respecting their daily exercise and their evening toilet. They only saw her at dessert, and stayed with her white she read evening prayers to the servants, on which occasions her maids would come into the room very demurely, working the Countess' delicate laces, her stockings at four guineas the pair, and even flourishing her own gold-embroidered pocket-handkerchiefs, with a crown in the corner, under her very nose. Her thoughts being in the work before her, they were quite

safe from her scrutiny.

The education of the Ladies Villiers was chiefly entrusted to foreigners; in addition to whom they had also some English masters, both laymen and divines. So anxious was Lady Jersey about her daughters' spiritual weifare, when instructing a new governess in her duties. she said, alluding to their religious training, "Je veux que teur premiere pensee le malin soit a Dieu." From a sense of duty the Countess paid every morning a flying visit to the schoolroom; and from the same notion she came once to bold a kind of general examination. On the latter occasions such startling ques-tions were asked as to throw the Italian tions were asked as to throw the Italian governess, who, like most inhabitants of the South, had a flery temper, invariably into une crise nerveuse. Driven to frenzy one day, when Lady Jersey insisted on knowing how long the Romans stayed in America, and in what part were their encampments? the governess wrote a long letter, in which she complained of her ladyship's interference. The Counters at once discontinued her examinations, saying good-naturedly, "Je croyais vous assister."

It was the custom of Lord and Lady Jersey to sit at night in the library surrounded by their children, their guests, and a whole array of ancestors addraing the walls. Many of the family portraits were full length and in magnificent trames. They included the family group of the celebrated Duke of Buckingham, the intriguing Sarab, Duchess of Mariborough, Adrian de Villars, Grand Master of the Knights of Rhodes, and the celebrated Barbars Villers, best known as Lady Castelmaine in Charles IPs time. There were also portraits of Lady Jersey's sisters, represented as biblical characters, or in fanciful

costumes, according to the prevailing taste of the time.

Far away from these gorgeous pictures, hid-den by projecting book shelves, hangs in a dark cerner a little portrait which, although possess-ing the attributes of "fat, fair, and forty," forms a melancholy contrast to those magnificent portraits in glittering frames. It is the only like-ness preserved of Lord Jersey's mother. Every other trace of her who formerly inhabited the house is carefully obliterated, nor was her name ever pronounced by any of the family except in one instance.

one instance.

A large party was one evening assembled, when some lady, bappening to light on a fittle manuscript music-book, began playing its contents. The conversation, which until then had been very loud, suddenly stopped, while a strange whispering took its place, which increased when Lady Jersey, in answer to her inquiry about the name of the piece, was informed it was "George IV's favorite march." With great tact she praised it, and requested a repetition of the same; while Lord Jersey, delighted to recognize the march his mother used frequently to play, explained that it was her music-book which was just then being explored.

Like all women in a conspicuous position, Lady Jersey was much envied by many of her

Lady Jersey was much envied by many of her own sex, who accused her of conceit and pride, though the former became with her almost a virtue. The consciousness of having the largest diamonds and being the handsomest woman in the room deterred her from being jealous of others, and kept her in that happy and even temper which was her greatest charm.

Her pride, on which frequently much stress has been laid, consisted chiefly in exalting her husband's family by tracing with great persistence the descent of the Jerseys to the celebrated Duke of Buckingham, James P's favorite. Pride never entered into Lady Jersey's domestic rela-tions. Annually she gave a ball at Middleton Park, to which all the upper servants and chief villagers were invited. There was no restraint, though the Countess, her family, and all her friends iound in the deeper. friends joined in the dance.

Owing to Lady Jersey's unbounded charity, they were no really poor people at the village of Middleton. She supported the old and infirm, gave employment to the robust in health, and provided comfortable cottages for all. About provided comfortable cottages for all. About Christmas an immense stock of warm winter clothing was distributed by the Ladies Villiers among the old and needy, who, far from being grateful, often received their presents almost grumblingly, because "her ladyship" did not give them herself, and never chatted with them as "the wicked Lady Jersey" formerly had done. Want of sympathy with the poor could, however, not be laid o the Countess' charge. At the rebuilding of the house at Middleton several severe accidents occurred, and two of the workmen were killed occurred, and two of the workmen were killed on the spot. Lady Jersey immediately took charge of the children; but they being mere infants, she had them carefully brought up and sent to school until old enough to be taken into the house. I myself remember two orphans in her household who had been there from their earliest infancy. The eldest, after having passed through the different gradations in the nursery until she herself became head-nurse, married on a retiring pension granted by the

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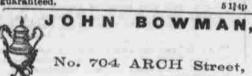
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